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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

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ACTION L-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	CCO-00	CG-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	WHA-00	DS-00	EB-00
	FAAE-00	VCI-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	CAC-00	M-00
	VCIE-00	NEA-00	NRC-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	OCS-00	OMB-00
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	SCT-00	ISNE-00	SP-00
	SS-00	T-00	USSS-00	ASDS-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/000W			

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5297
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
FBI WASHDC IMMEDIATE
NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 001612

DEPT. FOR L, S/CT, WHA/BSC, WHA/PPC
NSC FOR
FBI FOR CTD/IRAN-HIZBALLAH UNIT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2016

TAGS: PTER, PINR, PREL, PGOV, IR, AR

SUBJECT: AMIA INVESTIGATION UPDATE: PROSECUTOR'S REPORT
CLOSE TO FINAL

REF: A. 04 BUENOS AIRES 2540
B. 04 BUENOS AIRES 3081
C. 03 BUENOS AIRES 4022
D. 03 BUENOS AIRES 2242
E. 05 BUENOS AIRES 2844
F. 05 BUENOS AIRES 2115

Classified By: CDA, a.i., Hugo Llorens, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: The AMIA Special Prosecuting Unit, in operation since September 2004, has concluded its investigation of the July 18, 1994 terrorist attack -- focused principally on the suspected Iranian and Hezbollah roles -- and is in the final stages of preparing its report with findings and recommendations to the Investigating Judge

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
CLASSIFICATION: SECRET REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 19 JUL 2026
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Rodolfo Canicoba Coral. The report will cover familiar ground -- Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman and his team have come to the same conclusions as original investigating Judge Juan Jose Galeano (now impeached), i.e. that the attack was planned and financed by the Government of Iran and carried out with the operational assistance of Hezbollah and local Iranian diplomats.

2. (C) Nisman, however, has built on the evidence compiled by Galeano

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to follow up new leads and put together a very credible case that should identify the intellectual authors, the identity of the Palestinian suicide bomber, and the organization and movement of Hezbollah in the Tri-border Area (TBA) and Buenos Aires with the assistance of local Iranian diplomats. Once the report is presented to Judge Canicoba Coral, there is no specified time in which he is obligated to take action, e.g. accepting it in whole or part, or rejecting the findings of Nisman's team. The latter case is not likely and it is expected that Canicoba Coral will accept the bulk of the prosecutors, case and move quickly to issue new indictments.

The next step then would be for Canicoba Coral to request International Capture Notices through Interpol.

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End Summary.

The Terrorist Attack:

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4. (U) The completion of the special prosecutors, investigation will be the latest and, perhaps, the most important and promising development in the long and disappointing saga of a mismanaged and overly politicized 12-year investigation into the July 18, 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA). The attack by a suicide bomber completely destroyed the seven story structure killing 85 people and injuring more than 300. In many ways it was Argentina's September 11, and remains one of four major attacks by international terrorist groups in this hemisphere -- the others being the Israeli Embassy bombing here in 1992, the WTC bombing in 1993, and the 9/11 attacks.

Inside Connection:

5. (U) The AMIA investigation has been plagued by controversy and political manipulation from the very beginning. In late 2004 several Buenos Aires police officers and a local chop-shop owner, who had been charged with conspiracy in providing the vehicle used in the attack, were acquitted, largely due to inappropriate activities by the original investigating judge, Juan Jose Galeano. In December 2003, a three-judge panel removed Judge Galeano (the judicial panel also recused the investigating prosecutors Jose Barbaccia and Eamon Mullen from the case in April 2004), ruling that Galeano had committed a number of judicial improprieties, including authorizing SIDE (the Argentine Intelligence Agency) to make a \$400,000 under-the-table payment to the chop-shop owner in return for testimony alleging the complicity of the Buenos Aires police officers in the crime. The chop-shop owner, while guilty of involvement in an auto theft ring, had no foreknowledge the vehicle he sold would be used for the attack.

Interpol Capture Notices:

6. (U) Following the September 2004 acquittal of the Argentine defendants accused of complicity in the bombing (reftels A and B), Iranian officials lobbied hard in Lyon for Interpol to rescind the red notices. Their argument was based on the acquittals in the AMIA trial, the allegations of the court of improprieties in the conduct of the original investigating judge, prosecutors and government authorities, and the failure of the GOA to secure the extradition of former Iranian Ambassador Souleimanpour from the U.K. Based

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on this information, Interpol's General Assembly suspended the red notices in October 2004 (reftel C), pending further clarification from the Argentine Investigating Judge Canicoba Coral. Canicoba Coral's response was to "recertify" on two occasions in 2004 that his capture requests were still valid.

He failed (or declined), however, to address the questions raised by the Iranians in their request to rescind the red notices, reportedly because he saw the Interpol Secretary General's actions as exceeding the SG's authority.

The Menem Investigation:

7. (C) The 1994 attack and initial investigation occurred under the administration of former president Carlos Menem.

[REDACTED]

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Early on

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[REDACTED] investigators made the Iranian/Hezbollah connection. Judge Galeano was able to make significant progress and pull together credible, circumstantial evidence linking Iran and Hezbollah to the attacks, as well as uncovering the complicity of the local Argentines in providing the stolen vehicle used in the attack. The trial of the local defendants by a panel of three judges began in September 2001, with the defendants ultimately acquitted three years later in September 2004.

8. (C)

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] much progress has been made on the international connection to the bombing. A Lebanese-based group called "Partisan of God" initially claimed responsibility for the AMIA blast

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De la Rua and Duhalde Years:

9. (U) President Fernando De la Rua assumed office in December 1999. He continued with the same investigative

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team, with little significant progress before relinquishing office early in the face of growing social unrest. There was a quick succession of interim presidents appointed, with Eduardo Duhalde finally taking the helm in January 2002. In January 2003, and under pressure from President Duhalde to complete the investigation, SIDE handed over a detailed report on the attack to Duhalde and to Judge Galeano. Based largely on the information contained in the report, the investigating prosecutors asked Galeano in early 2003 to issue arrest orders for 28 individuals noted in the SIDE report as responsible for the attack. On March 5, 2003, Judge Galeano, issued international arrest orders for four Iranian officials (reftel C). In May, Galeano also requested the arrest of a leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah, Imad Moughniyeh, already wanted for the 1992 bombing of the Embassy of Israel. The prosecutors and complainants believe Judge Galeano should have issued arrest orders for more suspects, but the judge argued that the evidence against the remaining suspects at the time was not strong enough.

10. (U) The Duhalde Government, through the Foreign Ministry, de-linked itself from Judge Galeano's March arrest orders, emphasizing the separation of the judiciary and the executive (reftel D). The Foreign Ministry also publicly noted its concern that significant Argentine exports to Iran could be put in jeopardy by the arrest requests. In response, Iran repeated its frequent denials of involvement in the attack and threatened Argentina with "appropriate measures" if the GOA did not retract the arrest orders. While the Duhalde government shared considerable information from the SIDE investigation with the judges presiding over the AMIA trial, it appealed an order by the court to open SIDE's intelligence files and limited the information and testimony made available in the trial.

President Kirchner Re-invigorates the Investigation:

11. (U) Newly inaugurated President Nestor Kirchner, however, and his new SIDE chief at that time, Sergio Acevedo, announced on June 5, 2003, that SIDE would open to the parties involved in the trial all of its files on the AMIA investigation and issued a Presidential decree to this effect. Furthermore, they mandated that all 14 of the SIDE staff involved in the investigation could testify in the trial, rather than just the five supervisory level officials previously made available. The actual decree included a clause allowing SIDE to edit out of any testimony circumstances that might reveal intelligence sources and methods.

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12. (C) Since taking office President Kirchner has strongly pressed for reenergizing the stalled investigation, creating the new Special Prosecuting Unit led by General Prosecutor Alberto Nisman, a highly regarded and energetic young prosecutor. The Special Prosecuting Unit has a staff of more than 40 investigators and analysts and has been given ample government funding. In frequent meetings with Argentine and U.S. Jewish community leaders, President Kirchner has vowed to support the investigation "wherever it leads and to whomever it implicates."

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